

Is Purugly a Good Pokemon?

Purugly is not one of the most popular Pokemon from the Diamond and Pearl generation of games, commonly known as Generation 4. But, the Tiger Cat Pokemon does have some positive qualities that make her an underrated good lead Pokemon in the Underused (UU) tier of the Smogon competitive scene. Will these qualities hold up in the Generation 8 remakes of those games in Brilliant Diamond and Shining Pearl?

Chief among Purugly's best qualities is her excellent base Speed stat of 112. This makes Purugly faster than Latias and Latios, legendaries known as some of the best Pokemon to use in the game competitively. She also learns Fake Out, which because she is faster, means that not only does she often get in the first move in a game, but will prevent an opponent's Pokemon from attacking first for the first couple of turns of the game. That's because Fake Out flinches an opposing Pokemon, giving Purugly an additional chance to hit with her decent Attack stat, a base value of 82.

Unfortunately, Purugly has lost one of her most important moves, a physical Dark-type move called Knock Off in the Diamond and Pearl remakes. It's a major hit to Purugly's competitive moveset that Knock Off doesn't exist in Brilliant Diamond or Shining Pearl, especially as Knock Off not only hits fairly hard, but also deprives that opposing Pokemon of its held item. Held items are a big deal in competition, whether it's a berry to heal or resist damage, Leftovers to heal a Pokemon over time, or some other item that boosts that Pokemon's attack or defense.

Also unfortunate for our kitty friend, the best Normal type physical move she could learn before being removed in Sword and Shield is Return. That's because this move, which depends on friendship that could easily be maxed out, was considered a cheap move that gave Normal-type Pokemon perhaps more of an edge than they deserved. Losing Return is a blow, but not one this Cat can't handle thanks to a fairly deep move-pool.

On the positive side, Purugly gained access to a new move in Play Rough, the most powerful physical Fairy-type move, during the Generation 6 X & Y games. She still learns this in Brilliant Diamond and Shining Pearl, but unfortunately, only before she evolves as a Glameow. While Glameow typically evolves at level 38, it learns this powerful physical Fairy-type move at level 50 while Purugly never does, meaning you have to delay your Tiger Cat's evolution for 12 levels! This is worth doing, as Play Rough is likely the best replacement for Knock Off. While Sucker Punch and several other Dark-type moves are still learned by Purugly, none of them hit nearly as hard or as often.

There are also a few drawbacks that Purugly must contend with, as because she is a Normal-type Pokemon, she is two times weak to Fighting-type moves, which are quite common in the 4th generation of these games. Also, this Cat despite being bulky in visual design, has below average HP, Defense, and Special Defense base stats. To overcome these defensive shortcomings, competitive players often give Purugly a Life Orb to power up her attacks by 30 percent at the cost of 1/8th HP each turn. When the Silk Scarf became available in Black and White (Generation 5) onward, other players would opt to use this alternate held item to power up just the fat cat's Normal-type moves. Generally, the Life Orb is considered the stronger option, allowing Purugly to hit fast, do the most damage it can do, then switch into a teammate who can best handle the given situation.

Probably the best way to utilize Purugly in the newer Diamond and Pearl games is much how you would utilize her in the original Gen 4 games, as a lead with Fake Out to start off your adventure is a boon to your team. You can then teach her U-Turn, a bug type move that hits for a decent amount of damage but then forces you to switch Pokemon. A Purugly with Fake Out, U-Turn, and Play Rough is likely a solid lead.

The fourth move slot could potentially include either Body Slam for another Normal-type move or Taunt to stop opposing Pokemon from using their power-up moves such as Swords Dance or hazard setters like Stealth Rock. Another option could include Shadow Claw for some Ghost-type coverage that hits both Ghost-type and Psychic-type Pokemon for super-effective damage. While she may not make a list of top tier competition, Purugly can easily outspeed a ton of opposing Pokemon, making her an offbeat lead choice for any clever trainer.

Of course, don't overlook Glameow, either. She's been a useful Pokemon in Little Cup for several generations, thanks to the same things that make Purugly good. Glameow's 85 base speed is still quite good, and she learns Fake Out as her first move. With how Little Cup works, you can still learn Play Rough at level 50, since Little Cup forces the levels back to 5 automatically. Hilariously, Glameow and Purugly play pretty much exactly the same, but Glameow is best when competing against other unevolved Pokemon.

You can build an even better Purugly by paying attention to her nature. Because of her high base Speed stat, it seems best to choose to train a Glameow / Purugly with a Jolly nature. This nature boosts Speed stats while lowering Special Attack stats. While Glameow and Purugly can learn a wide range of Special attack moves for type coverage, neither Pokemon is best suited for special attacks thanks to a mediocre Special Attack base stat. Glameow has a measly 42 special attack and Purugly's is 64, so you are fine giving up on special attacks altogether. Alternatively, you could choose an Adamant nature, and go all in as an attacker, using Body Slam (which has same-type attack bonus or STAB, plus a chance to paralyze the opponent) and Shadow Claw, a powerful Ghost-type move. Either build works depending on how you build the rest of your Pokemon team.

In the main adventure, you can only find Purugly in Pearl or Shining Pearl, and not Diamond or Brilliant Diamond. You couldn't find Purugly in Platinum, either, so you would need someone with a copy of Pearl or Shining Pearl to catch one for you if you didn't own that version. (I acquired both versions for the Nintendo Switch.) In the original Pearl game, because you needed the Cut HM to access certain parts of the game, many players caught a Glameow just to learn Cut. Fortunately, the remakes don't require HM's, and while Cut still exists as a TM, and is a same-type Normal move these Cat Pokemon can learn, it's no longer necessary. This opens up the possibility of Purugly being a solid lead for an adventure team, something it rarely had the chance to do in the original Generation 4 games.

While Purugly is not an overly strong Pokemon, she has enough positive attributes to make her very useful and competitive in the lower tiers of the Pokemon world. She's also not bad as a solid team member, although hardly the best you could choose in a generation full of significantly more powerful options than the Tiger Cat Pokemon. Hilariously, thanks to moves and abilities gained since the original Diamond and Pearl games, even first generation Normal-type Pokemon such as Kangaskhan and Dodrio may prove more competitive in the post-game than Purugly. Such is the nature of power creep over the eight generations of Pokemon, but Purugly can't be dismissed so quickly, especially as she still outspeeds Dodrio by two base stat points.

Purugly wasn't in Sword and Shield, but appeared in Brilliant Diamond and Shining Pearl. It didn't make it into Scarlet and Violet through the Pokemon Home update in 2022 unlike many others, though. It would be fun to see Purugly be competitive in future generations, although she is incredibly outclassed by Pokemon that have appeared in generations since. Shining Pearl is officially the first Pokemon game in which I seriously trained a Purugly for use in the main adventure, just because I never did it before. Hopefully, one of these days I happen upon a shiny Purugly, which is a rather nice shade of purple, to add to my growing shiny Pokemon collection.

While Purugly is far from being the most popular Cat Pokemon, it's certainly one of the most interesting. Have you ever used a Glameow or Purugly seriously in Pokemon? I'd love to hear your stories.

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